Consortium coordination in EU funded projects



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Educational Material Identity

Course on consortium coordination in EU funded projects

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Explanation of buttons and icons

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Structure

Main Goal
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Keywords

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Main Goal

This training course aims at providing best practices and knowledge on consortium management and coordination in the context of EU funded projects (both EU research and education programmes).

More specifically, it will provide:

- Key elements of effective project environments
- Tips to manage transnational teams and for a successful project coordination within the framework of EU funded projects

Expected Learning Outcomes 1/3

Knowledge level

Learners will be able to understand:

- The rules and composition requirements for building Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ KA2 project consortia
- Key elements of effective project environments in EU-funded consortia
- Roles and responsibilities of partners, steering committees, advisory boards, and working groups
- Importance of governance structures (decision-making processes, conflict resolution, transparency)
- Tools for planning and coordination
- What Lump Sum funding is and why it was introduced
- Challenges of managing transnational and multi-sectoral teams
- Best practices for fostering teamwork, feedback culture, and continuous improvement
- Mindsets required for effective project coordination, including leadership, planning & communication, and risk management

Expected Learning Outcomes 2/3

Skills level

Learners will be able to:

- Design and implement a governance structure tailored to the needs of a transnational consortium
- Analyse cross-sectoral cooperation value and integrate diverse organisations into a project consortium
- Define and distribute roles clearly among partners
- Develop and use tools like consortium agreements, Gantt Charts, and maps of activities to plan and monitor progress
- Facilitate effective communication within the consortium
- Manage risks by identifying potential issues and implementing adaptive solutions
- Lead transnational teams with diplomatic and social skills
- Foster a culture of life-long learning by promoting teamwork, ice-breaking activities, and mutual understanding

Expected Learning Outcomes 3/3

Attitudes level

Learners will be able to develop:

- A collaborative mindset, valuing teamwork, shared vision, and mutual respect among consortium members
- Openness and transparency in communication, ensuring all partners are informed and engaged
- Flexibility and adaptability to navigate challenges in transnational and multi-sectoral projects
- Proactive problem-solving, anticipating risks and addressing conflicts diplomatically
- Leadership with balancing guidance and support without resorting to top-down control
- A commitment to continuous improvement
- Cultural sensitivity, recognising and respecting the diversity of perspectives within the consortium
- Accountability, taking ownership of roles and responsibilities to ensure project success

Keywords

- Consortium coordination
- Consortium building
- Cross-sectoral cooperation
- Eligibility criteria
- Governance structure
- Transnational teams
- Project management
- Communication strategies
- Consortium Agreement
- Risk management
- Leadership
- Lump sum
- Collaborative environment

Introduction

In EU funded projects, an efficient project management and coordination within the context of a well-set transnational consortium requires:

- **Strong engagement**
- Effective **communication**
- **Capacities for negotiation, flexibility and adaptation**



A well-established and transparent governance structure, good communication tools and channels, a well-defined consortium agreement and careful joint planning are essential to **work together in a coordinated way**.

Consortium building

Collaboration lies at the **heart of scientific advancement and effective training**. A well-structured consortium is the **backbone** of any successful project, ensuring that goals are met with clarity and efficiency. While the process demands time, effort, and meticulous planning—often feeling overwhelming—it is a critical step toward project success.



To build a thriving initiative:

- Understand the **evaluation criteria and define each partner's role.**
- Select the **right collaborators through strategic networking** and rigorous assessment.

The ideal partnership enhances **project quality, ensures smooth implementation, and delivers sustainable outcomes.**

Consortium building

Coordinator

submits the proposal, signs the Grant Agreement, manages finances and reporting, responsible for the project and implementation of tasks

Beneficiary

implements tasks, receives EU funding, jointly responsible for the project

Associated Partner

Contributes at any stage without EU funding; their costs are not eligible

Consortium building

Complementarity

- partners cover all required competences (pedagogical, scientific, technical, industrial, societal…)

Balance

- Geographic: mix of diverse countries representing Europe and above
- Sectoral: academia, civil society and industry
- Disciplines: diversity in topics

Track record

- Prior EU projects and collaboration
- Publications
- Market experience

Effective partner-finding strategies

- Use official EU platforms such as the European School Education Platform (ESEP), eTwinning, or the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform (for Erasmus+),, Horizon Europe NCP portal, Enterprise Europe Network, EURAXESS, Partnering Portal, RADIANCE (for Horizon Europe) or Funding & tenders portal (for both)



These tools enable you to search for institutions with specific expertise or prior project experience.

- Attend **partner-finding seminars** and **contact events** organised by National Agencies.

These events offer opportunities to meet potential partners in person and explore collaboration possibilities.

Effective partner-finding strategies

- Make use of your **existing professional networks**, including colleagues with international project experience or connections to foreign institutions.

- Join **relevant social media groups** focused on Erasmus+ partnerships, where institutions frequently post partner search announcements.



To establish initial contact:

- Share a clear project concept.
- Explain why you're interested in collaborating with them specifically.
- Highlight the mutual benefits.
- Use this transparent approach to foster trust from the outset.

Clear planning and distribution of roles

It is important to ensure that all the project partners have a clear understanding of the nature of the collaboration and are fully committed to it.



From application stage, they should agree and be informed of:

- Roles assigned to their team for the implementation of activities and production of deliverables/results
- Reporting process defined within the consortium
- Deadlines which are set for activities, milestones and deliverables
- Deadlines which are set for the internal reporting phases

Clear planning and distribution of roles

Useful tool #1: Consortium Agreement

This legal contract between partners should include articles related to reporting, distribution of roles and productions to achieve.

Useful tool #2: Gantt Chart

This document should be annexed to the consortium agreement. It should include clear deadlines and should be updated whenever modifications are approved.

Useful tool #3: Map of activities

A synthetic visual map of tasks and activities to carry out enables to have an overview of the distribution of roles between contributors, task leaders, WP leaders etc.

Governance within EU funded projects' consortia



Each EU funded project with a transnational consortium should define a **governance structure** from application stage.

The purpose of consortium governance is to:

1. Foster decision-making processes
2. Respect the interests of the different consortium partners in an equitable manner

The governance framework of each consortium is **unique** and depends on the number and type of organisations which take part in the project.

Governance within EU funded projects' consortia

The **larger, more transnational and more multi-sectoral** the consortium is, the more important it is to establish a structured governance system and conflict resolution procedures.

A transnational consortium should at least set up the following internal structures:

1) Management

- A **steering committee** responsible for the overall management of the consortium, activities and outputs
- Coordinated by the lead organisation
- Ensures a set of mutually agreed, shared operational requirements and responsibilities
- Foster legitimacy of decisions made for the project

Governance within EU funded projects' consortia

2) Advisory Board

- Experts in their field and independent of the research or education consortium
- Meet regularly (usually annually or bi-annually)
- Ensures quality assurance from peers, alignment with needs and interests of stakeholders and target groups

3) Committees or working groups

- Focus on specific aspects of the project workload, activities or results
- Examples: Publications, Ethics, Quality Assurance, Sustainability

Governance within EU funded projects' consortia

TIPS!



Best practice #1

To ensure that the governance system defined in the proposal is aligned with future contributors of the project, project coordinators and their partners should be **engaged in the definition of the structure** (not only the grant advisors!).

Best practice #2

Avoid rigid governance structures, with no autonomy for the working groups or committees. This rigidity will reduce engagement and involvement of researchers and teachers.

Good governance needs not be **top-down and hierarchical** but should **foster collective intelligence!**

Governance within EU funded projects' consortia

TIPS!



Best practice #3

Consortium's governance structure should be transparent. **Transparency** = accessibility and visibility of the consortium's governance structures.

Good governance requires that both internal and external participants to the project **know what governance structures and procedures are in place**, what decision-making processes have been settled etc.

Effective communication and monitoring strategies

A lack of clarity and structures almost always leads to personal frustrations and tensions. Clear and regular communication within the consortium is required.



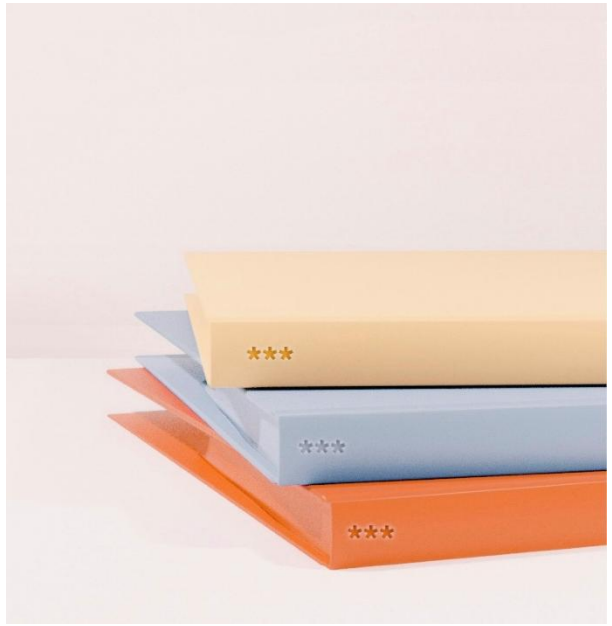
Best practice #1: Foster a culture of feedback

- Create a project environment where partners and participants talk openly, share what they know and what problems they face
- Plan regular reporting phases: with lump sum grants, avoid strict financial supervision from the Coordinating organisation but aim for quality of results



Effective communication and monitoring strategies

TIPS!



Best practice #2: Project Toolbox

- Folder of project management tools and documents
- Prepared by the Coordinating organisation to support partners' everyday administration of work progress, financial and technical reporting, archiving documents
- Should include:
  - Official documentation: copies of Grant Agreement, Consortium Agreements etc.
  - Guidelines: EC / Erasmus + Agencies guidelines, internal management handbook
  - Planning documents: Gantt chart, Map of activities, Synthesis of results to be achieved, documents to be submitted and deadlines
  - Minutes and agendas of meetings
  - Internal Reporting templates (technical and if relevant for the call, financial)
  - Contacts list

Effective lump sump management

What is Lump Sum Funding?

The total grant amount is defined upfront and **fixed in the Grant Agreement**. Payment is linked to the **acceptance of completion of Work Packages**. The project amount is granted based on **achieving agreed outputs and results**.



Here to stay:

Lump Sum is the dominant model in Erasmus+ since 2021 and plays a central role in the **new EU funding architecture 2028–2034**.

Why was it introduced?

- **Lowering the error rate** and reducing unintentional financial/administrative errors
- **Reducing administrative burden** – less financial reporting, no timesheets or cost proofs
- Focus on **content, results and impact** rather than cost justification
- Enhancing **transparency** – focus on performance, easier to track progress and verify impact
- Better **flexibility** – increased accessibility and inclusivity for newcomers and SMEs

Effective lump sump management



Guiding principles

- **Accuracy and integrity**
  Beneficiaries must ensure all submitted information is **complete, reliable, and verifiable**—no gaps, no errors.
- **Alignment with Work Packages**
  The claimed lump sum **must directly correspond** to the successful completion of activities outlined in the project's Work Packages.
- **Audit-ready execution**
  Beneficiaries must be prepared to **demonstrate proper implementation** of activities during any checks, reviews, or audits

Effective lump sump management



Advantages of lump sum funding in EU projects

- **Streamlined reporting**

The focus shifts entirely to delivering **high-quality results and outputs**, eliminating the need for timesheets or detailed cost justifications. This encourages teams to prioritise impact over paperwork.

- **Resource flexibility**

Project teams gain **autonomy in resource allocation**, allowing them to adapt budgets and staffing dynamically to meet evolving needs.

- **Reduced administrative burden**

This approach **simplifies coordination** by minimising bureaucratic tasks, freeing up time and resources for strategic project management

While lump sum funding reduces administrative requirements, it **does not prevent the coordinator from requesting regular financial reports** from beneficiaries to ensure transparency and accountability.

Expected mindsets and profiles within a consortium

A good consortium relies on:

- Efficient relationships between project members
- Strong share of project values and vision
- Teams who are actively engaged in activities and decision-making processes
- Mutual knowledge about people in the assigned project teams
- Clear overview and understanding of their institutional organisation and processes
- Strong leadership but a clear distribution of roles
- Culture of collective feedback and a culture of continuous learning and improvement



Expected mindsets and profiles within a consortium

To ensure this environment:

- Encourage **teamwork** in diverse groups (more than just regular meetings)
- Plan **ice-breaking activities** (meetings, on-site activities or events) and leave room **for informal discussions between peers**
  - *Especially during the proposal design and if the project gets selected, during the first year of the project*



Expected mindsets and profiles within a consortium

For a successful coordination of the consortium, the project coordinator and their coordination team should have:

#1 Leadership (but not control)

Project coordination is not a democracy, but also not a dictatorship!
They oversee the planning and management of the project from inception to completion

Expected skills and mindset:

- Guidance and support
- Anticipation and resolving conflicts
- Inspiring confidence and trust in the project team
- Social skills

Expected mindsets and profiles within a consortium

#2 Planning and communication

They serve as the central point of contact for all consortium partners. They should facilitate collaboration between people.

Expected skills and mindset:

- Be open and transparent
- Capacities for planning regular meetings
- Capacities to provide an inclusive collaboration environment
- Active listening skills

Expected mindsets and profiles within a consortium

#3 Risk Management

They should be committed to assess and manage risks throughout the project lifecycle.

Expected skills and mindset:

- Flexible in approach
- Capacities for adaptation and negotiation
- Pro-active planning skills
- Problem-solving skills and creativity
- Diplomatic skills

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